

## The Coroner and Staff

The Whitman County Coroner's Office was established in 1981. Staff at the coroner's office come from a wide variety of backgrounds, making a complementary and cohesive team serving competently and compassionately, those experiencing the sudden and unexpected death of a loved one.

**Coroner Annie Pillers**, D-ABMDI Registry #2224, joined the department in 2008. Previously the Chief Deputy Coroner, she was appointed to Coroner March 2018 when former Coroner Pete Martin retired. She has a long history in public administration, non-profit administration, hospice, bereavement support, EMS services, and search and rescue.

**Chief Deputy Coroner Scotty Anderson**, D-ABMDI Registry #2795, joined the department in 2003. He has extensive experience in information systems management, corrections administration, computer forensics, photography, and fire and EMS services.

**Deputy Coroner Laura Lautenslager** joined the department in 2018. She brings years of experience in fire and EMS services, Army National Guard, and a medical assistant career in rural medical clinics.

**Deputy Coroner Dylan Keller** joined the department in 2018. Her background includes forensic and counseling psychology, juvenile services advocacy, corrections, youth life skill group facilitation, and EMS services.

## Resources

### Death Certificates

Whitman County Department of Health  
Vital Statistics (509) 397-6280  
<https://www.vitalchek.com/vital-records/washington/whitman-county-public-health>

Washington State Department of Health  
Vital Statistics (360) 236-4300  
<https://www.doh.wa.gov/LicensesPermitsandCertificates/BirthDeathMarriageandDivorce>

### Chaplaincy

Whitman County Chaplaincy,  
Ron McMurray (509) 397-6266

Pullman Police Department Chaplain  
Program, Matt McNelly (509) 592-7228

Palouse Police Department Chaplain  
Corey Laughary (509) 336-9154

### Counseling

Palouse River Counseling (509) 334-1133

Crisis Line Toll-Free (866) 871-6385

Emergencies - Police, Fire, Medical  
9-1-1

### **Whitman County Coroner**

Office: 411 N. Mill Street, Colfax, WA 99111  
Mailing Address: PO Box 627, Colfax, WA 99111-0627  
Report of a Death: 9-1-1  
Office Phone: (509) 397-5641  
Fax: (509) 397-6359  
Email: [annie.pillers@co.whitman.wa.us](mailto:annie.pillers@co.whitman.wa.us)

09/0319

# **Whitman County Coroner's Office**

*Kindness – Compassion – Assistance*

A Guidebook for Families

**Annie Pillers, D-ABMDI  
Coroner**



**WHITMAN  
COUNTY**

**509-397-5641 Office**

# Whitman County Coroner's Office

## The Role of the Coroner

The Coroner is responsible for investigating and determining the cause and manner of death for any sudden or unexpected, accidental, suspicious or unattended death in Whitman County.

Cause of death can be from a disease process such as cancer, a stroke, or heart attack, or from a sudden event such as a motor vehicle accident, industrial or farm accident, and many more.

Manner of death explains the nature of the death: natural, homicide, suicide, accidental or undetermined. It's very rare for the manner of a death to be undetermined.

Most deaths do not require an autopsy to determine cause and manner. However, autopsies are performed on all suspicious deaths and deaths in which cause and manner cannot be determined through the initial investigation.

The Coroner's Office issues the death certificates for all cases handled by the office.

The Coroner coordinates with the Whitman County Public Health Officer, Dr. Brad Bowman and the Whitman County Health Department when the cause of death threatens the public health.

## When to Call

When there has been a sudden or unexpected death call 9-1-1. Dispatchers will send the ambulance and local law enforcement to the scene. They request a coroner when needed, and as appropriate, a chaplain, or family pastor or faith leader if preferred by the family.

## The Scene Investigation

Upon arrival, the coroner meets with next-of-kin, law enforcement, EMS/Fire and others on scene. The coroner will ask for information about the events of the situation and medical history, if any.

The coroner takes scene photos, collects information, personal property, and evidence pertinent to the case. Personal property with the individual, including clothing, jewelry, wallets, purses, and money, will be secured by the coroner. An inventory will be prepared and upon completion of the investigation, these items will be returned to the next-of-kin.

Evidence remains with the Coroner's Office or local law enforcement. Prescription narcotic medications are collected and disposed of properly by the Coroner's Office.

The Coroner's Office makes arrangements for the individual to initially be taken to the closest funeral home in the area.

## Notifying Next-of-Kin

The Coroner's Office is responsible for notifying next-of-kin and works diligently and timely to do so. Without exception the preference is always for an in-person notification. The local chaplains work in concert with the Coroner's Office and law enforcement to make death notifications locally and, through outside law enforcement agencies, when next-of-kin is in another county or state.

Chaplains provide support to next-of-kin, witnesses, responders, and other agencies at the scene. Ron McMurray serves as the Whitman County Chaplain. The Pullman Police Department Chaplain is Matt McNelly. Corey Laughary is the chaplain for the Palouse Police Department.

## Family Arrangements

After the Coroner's Office has completed the investigation, the next-of-kin are welcome to make all the decisions appropriate to honor their loved one, including disposition and final arrangements with whatever funeral home they choose.

## A Service of the County

There are no costs for the services of the Coroner's Office.

***Kindness - Compassion  
Assistance***